

## Beloved

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*'This is my son, the Beloved, in him I am well pleased'.*

The word beloved has fascinated my faith for a very long time. You don't hear it very often, it seems rather old and ringfenced for sacred use. Films like to depict it being used by stuffy old vicars beginning a service with 'dearly beloved', but it is a real shame to simply leave it there.

'This is my son, the Beloved, in him I am well pleased'.

A Spiritual Director, guiding me through a rather scrupulous patch, once challenged me to imagine God saying those words, but directly to me. It was a scandalous challenge, I thought, and I resisted doing so for many months. However, the word 'beloved' percolated and kept appearing in my meditations.

We most often pronounce it 'belovéd' as a whole word with three syllables and the final e emphasised. However, removing that emphasis on the e changes the word entirely, indeed it moves it into two: be loved.

Allowing, or grasping, or accepting that God loves us is incredibly difficult. As difficult as the disciples found having their feet washed by Christ. We really struggle, draw ourselves away, find a million reasons why we can't possibly 'be loved'. I wonder whether this is an underlying reason that sinfulness became the major pre-occupation of the western Christian understanding.

I read an interesting quote about Lent from the Venerable Fulton Sheen recently, where he points out that the things of God move towards the positive not the negative. He seems to suggest that Lent should be a more joyful preparation of the garden than we've been led to believe. Pulling up weeds and planting seeds, preparing the ground and turning back to Christ. It is the process then of examining all the things that stand in the way of allowing ourselves to 'be loved'.

Cerebrally, we know that we are loved by God, but what do we need to do to allow ourselves to heart fully and soulfully 'be loved'?

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